

nations. Polish, Czech, Dutch, Belgian, French man-power is drafted into Germany for semi-forced labour. Jewish men in Poland are apparently herded into reservations away from their stranded womenfolk. Many thousands of French soldiers are retained as prisoners. Hitler's dream of a Europe repopulated by 100 million "racially superior" Germans is more than ever the

inspiration of Nazi policy. I feel nevertheless that all this will lead nowhere. One day, when the nightmare is over and Europe faces once more the problems of reconstruction, the Swedish attempt to influence demographic trends by enhancing personal welfare and freedom will be found to have contained important hints for a British approach to the problem.

FAMILY ALLOWANCES IN WAR TIME

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THE fact that as many as 150 Members of the House of Commons drawn from all parties have put their names to a resolution asking the Government to formulate a scheme for "a national State-paid scheme of allowances for dependent children, payable to their mothers or acting guardians, as a means of safe-guarding the health and well-being of the rising generation," is a sure sign that the support for Family Allowances is growing every day. Women's organizations, religious bodies, professional societies and economists of note are also increasingly giving their support, not only to the principle of Family Allowances, but also to a universal state scheme.

It often happens in war that the national social conscience is strengthened, and that reforms which have been asked for in peace time for many years are adopted and dreams become facts. It would not be surprising should this happen in the case of Family Allowances, for the need is so greatly strengthened as a result of war conditions. The main ground on which it is being put forward is the need for maintaining an adequate standard of living for the children of the nation.

Readers of the EUGENICS REVIEW will be familiar with the peace-time figures—for

instance, Sir John Orr's estimate that at least 25 per cent of our children come from homes in which the income is too low to allow for adequate nourishment. But they may not be so familiar with the recent figures as to child-dependency drawn by Mr. Seeborn Rowntree from a recent social survey of 15,577 men in York. In this group: 57·8 per cent. had no children; 21 per cent. had one child; 12·3 per cent. had two children; 5 per cent. had three children; 2·3 per cent. had four children; and 1·6 per cent. had five or more children. It is significant that the 3·9 per cent. with more than three children accounted for over 23 per cent. of the total number.

Since the beginning of the war it has been estimated that the cost of living for working-class families has risen by at least 30 per cent. In some industries wages have risen as much, if not more, and overtime and the employment of more members of the family have resulted in higher incomes. But in other cases it has not been so, and incomes have risen much less than prices or even not at all. Often, moreover, when the man has been called up his wife has to manage on a greatly reduced weekly sum. The result is that many families who were previously above the poverty line are now below, and

that others who had previously been below are in still more straitened circumstances. Rationing has been established in order to spread reduced supplies of food fairly, but to give every child a ration card is of little use if there is no money with which to buy his share.

There is indeed no other way in which the problem of child nutrition and care can be satisfactorily dealt with. Food subsidies, it is true, reduce the cost of living for all classes ; but they do so in a wasteful manner for they help not only the poor but many who could do without help. Increased money wages all round only defeat their own ends by leading to inflation. Extended social services are valuable, but can offer little for children in their own home ; they provide school meals or milk but leave other needs untouched.

The population problem is of course one which must be emphasized in war time. Mr. Lafitte estimates that during the war of 1914 to 1918 there were half a million fewer births than there would otherwise have been. The separations and casualties of this war will necessarily lead to a reduction in the birth rate—though how much only time can show.

It is generally agreed that any scheme introduced now must be of a simple nature. A flat-rate scheme is therefore being advocated, to be financed by the state and to be universal in scope. The sum usually suggested is five shillings a week for each dependent child. Schemes to encourage births in those economic sections of the community that spend more than this amount on their children must needs wait. No doubt once Family Allowances have become familiar schemes such as the establishment of mutual insurance pools for different economic grades

could be superimposed on a flat-rate scheme. An interesting light should be shed on the differential birth rate once the minimum of physical needs have been guaranteed to all children ; present differences in mental and physical development between children in different social classes may well be gradually reduced.

Cost of a Scheme

The cost of a Government scheme at the rate of five shillings a week for all children has been estimated at £132,000,000 a year. The net cost would probably not be more than half this, for a large proportion of children (e.g. orphans, children of men serving in the Forces, evacuated children, children of widows, and children of unemployed men) are already receiving various forms of state allowances, none of which however are based on any scientific estimate of the minimum cost of child nurture. Income tax rebates are in effect children's allowances, but their full benefit is confined to those whose income is large enough to secure the maximum concession. An income of £350, for instance, is required before a rebate of even 6s. 3d. for each of three children can be paid. If a universal scheme of Family Allowances were established these would replace all existing allowances except to the extent to which these exceed five shillings. If the resulting net cost is considered still too high it can be reduced 50 per cent. by starting the scheme at the second child only.

It is interesting to note that the Federal Government of Australia has adopted a scheme which comes into force this July, in which an allowance of five shillings a week will be paid to the mother on behalf of all children starting from the second in each family.